

VZCZCXRO5718
OO RUEHDE RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHEG #7260 3621541
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281541Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3067
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 007260

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/28/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [EG](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA: EGYPT AND ARAB LEAGUE WORKING TO
REINSTATE PEACE TALKS

REF: STATE 203455

Classified by Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
Catherine Hill-Herndon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) MFA Assistant Minister for African Affairs, Ambassador Marsoum Marzouk, detailed Egyptian concerns and responses to the current fighting between Ethiopian forces and the Somali Council of Islamic Courts (CIC). Responding to ref A demarche, Marzouk noted that Egypt was an unlikely transit point for jihadists interested in joining the fight against Ethiopia in Somalia. Nor did he believe Egypt was in a strong position to exercise influence with the CIC, especially with Ethiopian military forces inside Somali territory in large numbers. Nevertheless, Marzouk promised to bring the U.S. message directly to the Minister's attention.

¶2. (C) Discussing steps that the international community might take to pressure the CIC and the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to reach a political solution, Marzouk noted that a prolonged Ethiopian military presence in Somalia made negotiations between the Courts and the TFG highly unlikely. Somali Parliament Speaker, who Marzouk met with in Cairo the previous day, claimed that face-to-face negotiations between the Courts and the TFG were impossible during Ethiopian occupation. Likewise, Marzouk said, Ethiopian intervention would likely increase Somali support for the Courts and push "moderate" politicians toward more extreme positions. Marzouk said the GOE had sent numerous diplomatic notes to the parties involved, urging restraint, cessation of hostilities, and implementation of UNSCR 1725. He warned that without a prompt UNSC call for a ceasefire and Ethiopian withdrawal from Somalia, parallels would be drawn between the perceived delays in Security Council action on Lebanon last summer.

¶3. (C) Ahmed Haggag, Secretary General of the Africa Society - a Cairo NGO with close ties to the GOE - told poloff on December 28 that the international community should call for all foreign troops to leave Somalia, to be replaced with IGAD troops from non-neighboring countries as per UNSCR 1725. He said that Ethiopian troops "have done their job" but will cause more instability the longer they remain in Somalia.

¶4. (C) U.S. support for an Ethiopian withdrawal would also improve the image of the U.S. among Somalis, Arabs, and Muslims in general, said Haggag. He explained that by delaying calls for an Ethiopian withdrawal, the U.S. brings up memories of its implicit support for Israeli action in Lebanon earlier this year. This fuels conspiracy theorists who see a larger U.S. and western war against Arabs and Muslims world-wide, he said.

RICCIARDONE